

Article - Natural Resources

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§4-710.

(a) (1) A person may not catch finfish for any purpose in the tidal waters of the State by use of any purse net, beam trawl, otter trawl, trammel net, troll net, or drag net.

(2) A person may use a gig or gig iron to catch finfish only for recreational purposes in the tidal waters of the State.

(3) Any person who violates this section by catching fish with any of the equipment or devices referred to in this subsection, with the exception of a gig or gig iron, is guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction is subject to a fine not exceeding \$1,000 or imprisonment not exceeding one year, or both, with costs imposed in the discretion of the court.

(4) Any person who illegally catches fish with a gig or gig iron is subject to the penalties provided by this title.

(b) An appropriately licensed person may fish in the waters of the Atlantic Ocean with an otter trawl or beam trawl, subject to Department rules and regulations, if the person is at least one mile from the shoreline. The Department rules and regulations shall include:

(1) Setting seasons when otter trawl or beam trawl fishing is permitted; and

(2) Enumerating the species of fish which may be taken.

(c) (1) A person may not fish with any net whose size of stretched mesh, allowing a reasonable tolerance for shrinkage, is less than the following: pound net, 1 1/2 inches; haul seine, 1 1/2 inches; gill net, 2 1/2 inches; fyke or hoop net, 1 1/2 inches.

(2) Any hedging or lead attached to a fish trap, fyke net, or pound net shall be constructed of materials which have meshes having a twine size of #12 or larger.

(3) In the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, a person may not set or fish any gill net whose size of stretched mesh is more than 6 inches.

(4) This subsection does not apply to catching eels with a net.

(d) (1) (i) Except as provided in subparagraph (ii) of this paragraph, a person may not use a monofilament gill net to catch fish.

(ii) The Department may adopt regulations to authorize the use of a monofilament gill net to catch fish.

(2) A person may use a monofilament cast net or a monofilament throw net to catch baitfish in any tidal water of the Chesapeake Bay or its tributaries.

(3) In casting a monofilament net as provided under paragraph (2) of this subsection, a person:

(i) May not use a cast net that has a radius greater than 10 feet; and

(ii) May cast a cast net only by hand.

(e) A person may not set any anchored gill net or fyke or hoop net or any line of these nets which has a length more than one-third the distance across the waters of the bay, sound, river, creek, cove, or inlet where it is set, or is set so that it impedes or obstructs navigation on or blocks in any way the main channel of the bay, sound, river, creek, cove, or inlet. The outer end of the submerged gear of any nets referred to in this subsection shall be marked by means of a paddle, a board, or a buoy or other floating device which shows the name and license number of the net owner.

(f) A person may not haul any seine or net more than one-third of the distance across the body of water, bay, sound, river, creek, cove, or inlet.

(g) A person may not catch or attempt to catch finfish by the use of any stationary fishing gear, or set an anchor or mooring buoy, or in any way obstruct the normal taking of finfish by drift net from December 1 through April 1.

This subsection applies only to waters more than 50 feet in depth in the Chesapeake Bay south of the William Preston Lane, Jr., Memorial Bridge and is not applicable to any Chesapeake Bay tributaries. This provision does not apply to any designated anchorage in existence on July 1, 1975. The Department has the authority to permit exceptions to this section by regulations when it can be shown that the obstruction will not interfere with a usable fishing reach.

(h) (1) Except when using finfish trotline or in State waters in the Atlantic Ocean, a tidal fish licensee may not use more than 2 hooks or 2 sets of hooks for each rod or line.

(2) For the purposes of this subsection, artificial lures or plugs with multiple or gang hooks are considered 1 set of hooks.

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